

# Scenario:

Italian Tripoli Bound Convoy – Oct. 19th & 20th, 1942  
A Mediterranean Campaign Scenario for SPI's UP SCOPE  
by M.C. Dean

Phoenix 14 suffered from a surfeit of **Up Scope** which probably made the average reader heartily sick of it. However, for me it only went to prove what an impact it made on all those bold enough to try this addictive game and stirred my good self into action for the benefit of those devotees still hungry for more. They will know that the designer, in his wisdom, neglected to include any scenarios involving British submarines for the simple reason that he didn't think it would be interesting enough. But as Mr. Jones proved, we in Britain know different. Therefore, for your delight I offer you this campaign game which covers similar ground to Mr. Jones' replay except in more historical detail. Hopefully it will be of interest to the non-naval buff as well if he confines himself to the scenario description.

## (10.44) Attack on Italian Tripoli Bound Convoy

**1. Scenario Description:** The Campaign in North Africa was greatly dependent on the arrival of supplies by sea. While the Allies had the slow but sure route around the Cape Rommel found himself constantly frustrated by Allied air and naval forces operating from Malta, astride his line of communications. This situation was accentuated in the summer of '42 when Rommel borrowed some of the Luftwaffe anti-Malta squadrons based in Sicily for his own personal use. He never gave them back and as a result Malta once more became active in his rear, since it was no longer subjected to the terrific aerial bombardment seen earlier that year. The net effect was that between July and December of 1942 35% of Axis supplies destined for North Africa never made it. This virtually decided the African Campaign and consequently Rommel was eventually defeated by the numerically superior Commonwealth Allies at Alamein.

Foremost amongst the forces which brought about this great victory were the submarines of 10th Flotilla based on Malta who, with the aid of Gibraltar and Alexandria based submarines, despatched 24 ships of approximately 80,000 tons during the last four months of 1942. A good example of the nature of the fighting in this crucial battle occurred in mid-October, only a short time before Alamein, when the Italians attempted to run a vital convoy through to Tripoli. This was soon detected by the Allies, thanks to aerial reconnaissance from Malta, and, owing to the importance of the convoy, maximum effort was made to obstruct its passage. At that time five submarines were in the area and these were hastily organised into a patrol line along the probable course of the convoy.

Thus, the Italian convoy of four transports and one tanker escorted by eight destroyers and anti-submarine aircraft was intercepted by the second submarine in the patrol line, "Utmost", at 08.40 on October 19th, having passed the first, "Safari", out of sight to her East, "Utmost" fired a salvo of torpedoes at long range which missed, but then made up for it by surfacing and reporting the convoy's course and speed to his friends further south. This unselfish act enabled "Unbending" to sink a transport and a destroyer later that morning and "Unbroken" to obtain two more hits in the afternoon, probably damaging the tanker and another transport at the cost of severe damage to her batteries in the ensuing counter-attack. At this point the damaged transport was escorted back to Lampedusa nearby and the convoy was tracked by further aerial reconnaissance before being bombed from Malta in the evening, gaining another hit on the tanker. During the night a fourth submarine, "United", fell in with the convoy only to score another

hit on the indestructable tanker, "Petrarca". Then finally, early on the morning of the 20th, "Safari", racing down on the surface, from its initial position in the North, caught up with a straggling transport from the now disorganised convoy and sank it with two salvos.

As a result of all this activity only one transport and the damaged tanker made it to Tripoli to discharge their valuable cargoes while "Unbroken" was forced to limp back to Malta on the surface. This convoy illustrated well the use of intelligence to place submarines in useful attacking positions and provided the British with a rare opportunity to execute a semi-Wolfpack attack with five submarines all making contact with the convoy, but about four hours after each other. The historic result was a minor submarine (Allied) victory.

**2. Scenario Type:** Campaign. Each individual scenario represents a brief period when the convoy is passing through a submarine patrol area and victory determination is as outlined in case 13. Exception:- Scenarios 2 & 3 may be played separately as detailed in case 10 b.

**3. Date:** Oct. 19th & 20th 1942.

**4. Time:** Dusk is at 1900. Dawn is at 0600.

**5. Ocean Condition:** Calm.

**6. Water Condition:** Variable (see case 10 d.).

**7. Ocean Depth:** 4.

**8. Map Format:** 1.

**9. Game Length:** Each Scenario lasts 20 Game Turns.

**10. Special Rules:**

a. During each day scenario the surface convoy is escorted by four Cant seaplanes which enter as given in case 12. These craft should be represented by contemporary aircraft counters with a movement allowance of 25 hexes per game turn. They have no offensive capability, but during the aerial search phase they may sight submarines, according to the following table with the submarine player rolling the die.

|          |   | Range in hexes |     |
|----------|---|----------------|-----|
|          | 0 | 1              | 2-3 |
| Sub.'s 0 | A | A              | A   |
| Depth 1  | 3 | 2              | 1   |
|          | 2 | 2              | 1   |

The number shown is that which must not be exceeded if contact is to be made. A= automatic sighting as the submarine is on the surface.

If contact is made the plane is presumed to dive at the contact and drop a flare (starshell counter) in the hex. (Do not physically move the plane). No submarine counter is deployed and all planes must keep at least six hexes from all other planes to avoid collisions.

b. Scenario 2 may be played individually as a standard convoy scenario with all surface vessels involved and the set-up as given. The same applies for scenario 3 except that one transport and one destroyer are omitted from the surface order of battle; they were sunk by "Unbending" in scenario 2.

c. The full campaign game represents five successive submarine attacks plus an optional air attack on the convoy on the 19th and 20th of October. After each scenario all Italian surface vessels which exit the Southern map-edge by game turn 20 are carried forward to the next scenario and all underwater weapons used and damage received must be recorded on the command tracks for future reference. Damaged vessels may turn back if accompanied by a full strength destroyer. To do this they must exit

the Northern or Eastern map-edge before game turn 20 of any of the first three scenarios. They are presumed to make for the islands of Pantelaria or Lampedusa, close to the route of the convoy. For victory points for these vessels see case 13.

d. Sonar conditions in the Mediterranean were notoriously bad, particularly in Summer, but rather than merely reducing the speed at which escorts may effectively operate sonar as Erratic Water does, I prefer to use the following table to reflect the effects of thermals and fish, known as Variable Water. Every time a submarine is sonar searched the submarine player rolls a die and consults the table below to determine the submarine's EV adjustment for that game turn.

| Die roll | Adjustment to EV |
|----------|------------------|
| 1,2      | +2               |
| 3,4      | +1               |
| 5,6      | 0                |

This of course complicates the use of false contacts, but this may be simply overcome using the following rules:- The submarine player rolls a die every four (or more at his option) game turns during the Underwater Detection Segment and if he throws a 1 or 2 he may place a false contact marker anywhere within an operating sonar search zone of an Italian destroyer. On each successive turn he must not exceed 3 on a die roll in order to maintain this false contact on the map, but otherwise it may move as a normal submarine until removed on failure to make the required die roll. At the beginning of the scenario this sequence may be commenced by the submarine player during any of the first 10 game turns.

e. Historically the Italians developed no sonar of their own during W.W.2. However, after heavy losses at the hands of Allied submarines on the North African convoy routes during 1941, the Germans began to supply their own sonar sets to the Italians to help Rommel in North Africa. By 1942 this process would have been half completed and for an important convoy such as this sonar equipped vessels must have been made available. Therefore, in the game half the escorts (rounded down) should be provided with German Mob-Sonder sets and should be recorded as such, maintaining the same I.D. codes throughout the campaign. i.e. sonar cannot be salvaged from sinking ships.

f. During each individual scenario convoy ships are assigned a steady speed and course for the first four game turns. No submarine may execute a combat mission during the first four game turns. Convoy ships may only face SE or SW while in convoy and may only turn every other game turn.

g. Each scenario is terminated at the instant the submarine has exited the map or sunk, with all vessels which could have exited the map being considered to have done so. Exited units may never return.

### 11. Submarines (British):

The historical deployment for each scenario is given below. However, for play balance and uncertainty roll a die before each scenario, there is a 50% chance that the submarine will enter as historically and a 50% chance it will enter in the same position but on the other side of the convoy. i.e. for East map-edge read West. Submarines are given by scenario.

**Scenario 1:** 0840 19/10/42. SO (Utmost): U class, B Efficiency, Lt. J.W.D. Coombe. Enters on the West map-edge North of the 1000 hex-row on game turn 4 or on any successive game turn with the limits extending 3 hexes further South per game turn. "Utmost" must surface on game turn 18 for the rest of the scenario to inform the other submarines of the convoy's course and speed. If he fails scenarios 2 & 3 each have only a 50% chance of taking place. "Utmost" was returning from a patrol at this time and therefore only carries 4 torpedoes.

**Scenario 2:** 1130 19/10/42. S1 (Unbending): U class, B Efficiency, Lt. E. Stanley. Enters



anywhere on the East map-edge any time before game turn 10. He also only has four torpedoes left.

**Scenario 3:** 1520 19/10/42. S2 (Unbroken): U class, B Efficiency, Lt.A. Mars. Enters anywhere on the East map-edge any time before game turn 10. Carries a full complement of torpedoes.

**Scenario 4:** 2200 19/10/42. Allied Air Attack (optional). Roll die and consult table below.

| Die roll | Damage code |
|----------|-------------|
| 1,2      | -           |
| 3        | F6          |
| 4,5      | T6          |
| 6        | F6,F10      |

**Key:** The letter denotes the type of ship damaged and the number denotes the column to use on the damage table to establish the number of durability points lost. Damaged ships may either turn back or go on to the next scenario at the surface player's option.

**Scenario 5:** 0100 20/10/42. S3 (United): U class, B Efficiency, Lt. T.Barlow. Enters anywhere on the West map-edge before game turn 10. Carries a full complement of torpedoes.

**Scenario 6:** 0520 20/10/42. S4 (Safari): S class, A Efficiency, Cmdr.B. Bryant. Enters on the North map-edge East of the 0008 hexrow on game turn 1. For "Safari" amend 11.23 as follows:- For SrS read 4 instead of 3, for Gun read 4 instead of 3 and for Tubes read 6B, 1S instead of the external Tube. "Safari" carries her full complement of torpedoes having come direct from Malta. Scenario 5 only takes place if the convoy speed is 2 as a result of damage carried forward from Scenario 4.

During day scenarios all submarines enter the map at depth level 1.

During night scenarios all submarines enter the map at depth level 0.

Submarines may exit the map at any time except in scenario 1.



### 12. Surface Vessels (Italian):

#### Convoy Ships:

The convoy is composed of four slow freighters and one slow tanker which move together as a convoy until reduced to less than two ships, with ships being permitted to drop out of the convoy on receiving damage. However, the tanker has a durability of 20 (historically it survived 3 hits) and is only reduced in speed by one point for every five damage points received. Similarly the freighters are only reduced by one in speed for every three damage points received.

**Escort Vessels:** Eight Soldati class destroyers (this is a guesstimate but the speed and quality seem about right and there were 19 vessels in the class), B Efficiency. They commence the campaign with only 20 depth charges each as a result of their habit of occasionally lobbing D.C.s over the side to ward off enemy submarines on becoming nervous or bored. The Surface player also has the four Cant seaplanes during day scenarios.

#### How Surface Vessels Enter the Map.

During each of the five submarine scenarios the surface vessels enter the North edge of the map at speed 3 (unless damage precludes this),

facing either SE (50% chance) or SW (50% chance) and the centre of the convoy i.e. the tanker must pass through hex 0123. All surface vessels must enter a distance apart from each other equivalent to the speed of the convoy. The entry schedule is as follows:-  
 Game Turn 1: 2 Destroyers, 2 Seaplanes.  
 Game Turn 2: 2 Destroyers, 2 Freighters.  
 Game Turn 3: 2 Destroyers, 2 Seaplanes, 1 Tanker.  
 Game Turn 4: 2 Destroyers, 2 Freighters.  
 Any vessels which have been sunk or turned back and are not available for a scenario are merely omitted from the O.B. in the most convenient manner possible which maintains a balanced convoy.

### 13. Campaign Game Victory Conditions:

1. Total the initial durability value of all convoy vessels at the start of the game i.e. 60.

2. At the end of the game the surface player records double the remaining durability value of all convoy vessels that make it to Tripoli and adds to this half of the remaining durability value of all convoy vessels which turned back successfully.

3. From the total derived in 2 is subtracted the durability value of all destroyers sunk.

4. To the total derived in 3 is added five points for each point of damage inflicted on a British submarine.

5. Finally subtract the total calculated in 4 from that calculated in 1 and apply the result to the standard convoy victory determination table in 10.23. (Italian destroyers are not convoy vessels only affecting victory determination as stated in 3).

## VECTOR 3 Reviewed by Paul King



Laser Operator Khan stared intently at the green 3-D battle display, two red dots indicated the intruders; two blue dots, his own ship and that of his wingman, Jor. He smiled, content in the fact that his own lasers could travel twice as far as those of the enemy. Rapidly the red dots sped towards their separate targets, but they suddenly veered towards him, and fired at twice their normal range. One beam hit a laser pod, the others ripped through his ship destroying the power plant and all manoeuvrability. Khan could only hope to escape by warping out of the area. By now the red dots were converging on Jor; just before he departed Khan watched the other blue dot wink out of existence. Now Khan must warn the others of the threat. So ends the Learning Scenario of S.P.I.'s new Microgame Space Capsule, **Vector 3**.

Up to the present, microgames have been the domain of Metagaming, with such classics as **OGRE** and **G.E.V.** These are, as the name suggests, small games with approximately 100 counters, and are quick, fun games. S.P.I. have ventured into this field with four games, and have outdone Metagaming in some respects; the counters are colourful as are the various playing aids, the rules can be read and play started within ten minutes. Once started, the action is fast and furious.

**Vector 3** has three types of ship, with a variety of weapons such as lasers, guided torpedoes and even exotic tractor-pressors and space mines. The counters show weapons "pods" which can be fitted to the ships of your choice on a display card. A Vector 1 ship has space for two weapons pods, a Vector 2 ship has room for four such pods, and the mighty Vector 3 carries six pods.

As for the playing map, it consists of two square grids, one to show horizontal-sideways movement, the other for horizontal-vertical movement. A player simply draws in a ship position on the two grids, and effectively provides a three-dimensional plot. Motion is by varying acceleration rate, actual speed is related to the technology of the ships. The map and movement are the same as for the Tactical Game of S.P.I.'s **Battlefleet Mars**, which was reviewed by John Evans in Phoenix 19.

The beauty of **Vector 3** is that you design your own ships, the armament, and how good it is. This is related to the scenario, each one giving a points value to be spent in buying weapons and technology. Quality would be a better word for the latter, for both sides might have lasers, but one side may have better lasers which fire further, whereas the other guy might think speed more important.

Combat involves firing lasers, or detonating torpedoes/mines. For the former, ranges must be worked out by Pythagoras — fortunately a simple table means you do not need a ships computer for this. Another table is consulted for hit probability, and an actual hit on a ship is determined randomly; presumably at the ranges involved combat cannot be too accurate. Torpedoes are moved like ships, and can be detonated within a square or two of the target, again this depends on technology and hits are scored in the same random manner as laser hits.

A game develops quickly as the ships speed towards one another, and once the idea of three-dimensional movement represented on two flat grids is understood, tactics develop just as rapidly.

For the science fiction buff the game is a must. For a gamer who fancies something different, it is worth having — the only limiting factor is your imagination, and lets face it we must have good imaginations or we would not be in this hobby.

One point of errata — the movement example given in the rules is incorrect, and should read "A ships velocity is -4, -2, 3. During the movement phase, the ship is moved on the 'X,Y' section four squares to the left and two squares 'up' the grid. The mark is moved on the 'X,Z' section four squares to the left and three squares towards the positive end of the 'Z' axis."

Well, Khan is going back with a couple of Vector 2 ships for the next scenario, armed with guided torpedoes, lets see if he can beat the hell out of those nasty Vector 1 laser ships. Mind you, their technology might have improved by now . . . . .